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Gorbachev greets Senators Robert Byrd, center, and Strom Thurmond, left.

## President Faces Rocky Climb to the Summit

**Reagan must cope with a fast-moving Gorbachev as well as deep splits over strategy within his own team.**

As the presummit propaganda struggle heats up, Mikhail Gorbachev is clearly gaining the initiative over Ronald Reagan.

In an orchestrated string of developments, the Soviet leader has moved out quickly to project the image of a reasonable, peace-loving statesman intent on achieving a major breakthrough in arms control at his November 19-20 meeting in Geneva with Reagan.

He has managed to throw the President on the defensive by drawing a contrast between an ostensibly conciliatory Soviet line and the tough stance taken in recent weeks by the U.S. administration, which he accuses of waging a "campaign of hatred" and accelerating a dangerous arms race.

In attempting to wrest the initiative from Gorbachev, Reagan is operating under a distinct handicap. For one thing, while the Kremlin leader strives to inflate summit hopes, the White House is bent on minimizing popular expectations to avoid the danger of a letdown after the November super-power meeting.

In the words of a State Department official: "They're putting the monkey on our back. Just when we're trying to tone down expectations over what will

come out of the summit, the Soviets are trying to raise them."

More important, the deep differences within his administration over how to deal with the Soviets and how to handle the Strategic Defense Initiative complicate the President's efforts to compete with Gorbachev in the battle for world—and especially European—opinion.

The principal challenge facing Reagan in the weeks leading up to the meeting: How to avoid being blamed for a failure to lay the basis for an agreement to curb the arms race without repudiating policies that he deems crucial for national security.

"The Soviet strategy," says an administration official, "is aimed at enabling Moscow to point an accusing finger at Washington when nothing major results from the Reagan-Gorbachev talks—which is exactly what we anticipate from the summit."

In pursuing that strategy, Gorbachev in rapid-fire order—

- Offered in a Kremlin meeting with eight U.S. senators to make "radical proposals" to reduce offensive nuclear weapons once Reagan agrees to bar the development and deployment of space weapons. This would impose a ban on Reagan's Star Wars missile-defense program except for what the Soviet leader termed "fundamental research."

- Announced the suspension of Soviet nuclear tests through this year and invited the U.S. to follow suit.

...that Moscow will end its unilateral moratorium on testing and deployment of antisatellite weapons if the U.S. goes through with an ASAT test against a target in space. The American shot actually was scheduled for September 4 but was postponed to avoid violating an advance-notice requirement mandated by Congress.

- Declared in an interview in *Time* magazine that "we certainly attach tremendous importance to the summit even though we do hear from the other side that they are taking a much more modest view of the meeting."

Gorbachev scored points not only with his apparent flexibility on substance but even more with the sophisticated style he displayed in his meetings with American senators and editors. One example cited by a key administration official: Throughout a lengthy interview, the Soviet leader, aware of Reagan's popularity in the U.S., avoided any personal criticism of the President himself. Instead, he focused his attack on presidential advisers or the "American position."

The skillful performance of the 54-year-old Kremlin leader is being contrasted with the inept behavior of his aged and ailing predecessors over the past decade. He is widely regarded as a formidable adversary for the 74-year-old Reagan, who has his own reputation as a great communicator.

The initial White House response to Gorbachev's freewheeling psychological warfare was to maintain its low-key approach to the summit and the prospects of a breakthrough on arms control. Presidential spokesman Larry Speakes declared that Reagan "is willing to meet the Soviets halfway in an effort to solve problems," but the spokesman continued to play down the likelihood of major substantive results.

**Mutual analysis.** "The important thing," he said, "is to have the two men look each other over, size each other up, lay out their views on these various topics and then be able to set up an agenda to deal with these in the future."

Speakes spoke of a built-in advantage that Gorbachev enjoys in the presummit-propaganda battle, pointing to the unilateral access accorded the Soviet leader to the American media. Calling for reciprocity in this field, he declared: "If President Reagan had a comparable opportunity to present his views to the Soviet people through the Soviet media, this would doubtless improve our dialogue."

However, Reagan's biggest problem in competing with Gorbachev is not access to the Soviet media but rather the controversy over Star Wars. The President maintains that the develop-

continued

ment by both superpowers of a space-based defense of the population against missile attack would serve Soviet as well as American interests by making nuclear weapons obsolete.

The Soviets, who see it differently, are determined to block this program. They fear that the U.S., by exploiting its advantage in technology, could achieve strategic superiority over the U.S.S.R.

The Reagan administration is divided over the issue. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, backed by Central Intelligence Director William Casey, is flatly opposed to any bargain with the Soviets that would hobble American freedom to develop a Star Wars system to defend the nation against a nuclear attack. Some of Weinberger's key aides, in fact, see dangers for the U.S. in any kind of arms agreement with Moscow.

Secretary of State George Shultz, backed by his chief arms adviser—Paul Nitze—would be inclined to trade off major reductions in Soviet missile forces for limits on SDI. But Shultz has been reluctant to push the argument in the face of Reagan's commitment to Star Wars.

In a middle position in this controversy is National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane, acting as an honest broker between the factions, though his private views are closer to the State Department's than to Weinberger's.

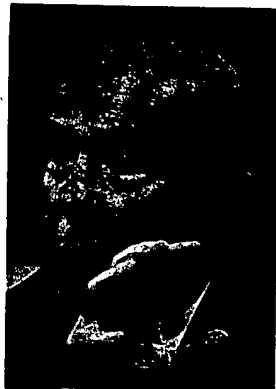
So far, Reagan has turned a deaf ear to arguments for making the SDI a bargaining chip in negotiations with Moscow. Gorbachev insists that the President's stand is an insurmountable barrier to an arms agreement, ruling out any cuts in offensive weapons unless they are linked to limits on Star Wars.

Only now is Reagan beginning to focus seriously on summit strategy and, in particular, on how to deal with the Star Wars question, with a National Security Council meeting on the subject scheduled for the second week of September.

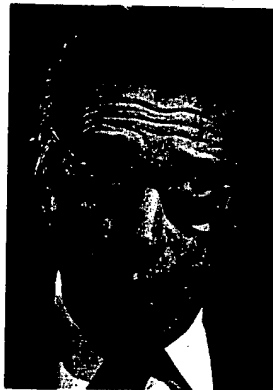
More than anything else, diplomatic experts agree, how Reagan handles this issue will determine whether he can regain the initiative from Gorbachev in the propaganda contest revolving around the November summit. □

By JOSEPH FROMM with JAMES M. HILDRETH,  
ROBERT A. KITTLE and BOB HORTON

### Key Players— How They Line Up



Secretary of State  
Shultz



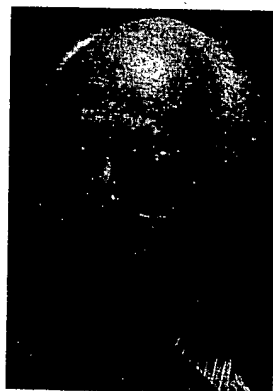
Defense Secretary  
Weinberger



National Security Adviser  
McFarlane



Chief arms adviser  
Nitze



CIA Director  
Casey

In the controversy over arms negotiations with Moscow, Shultz and Nitze favor flexibility; Weinberger and Casey oppose compromise on the Strategic Defense Initiative, while McFarlane plays the role of mediator between the two factions.

## U.S. Lawmakers Size Up Gorbachev

*Here are the impressions of five members of a bipartisan delegation of eight U.S. senators, led by Minority Leader Robert Byrd, after their September 3 meeting with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.*

**Senator Byrd (D-W.Va.):** "He is articulate, tough, serious and very much wishes that the dialogue begin and that the rhetoric be lowered just a bit. [He] encourages us to believe that he will be positive in his approach at the summit. [He] had no hard position to the effect that until we agree on a ban on [space] research there will be no agreement."

**Sam Nunn (D-Ga.):** "Gorbachev is a skillful and energetic leader. Such a skillful lawyer he would be comfortable at a trial lawyers' meeting. [He] is a man who deals in substance. I think it would be a serious mistake for the President to go into the summit thinking it will all be resolved by warm personalities." Gorbachev, in discussing Reagan's Star Wars "was clear that fundamental research could not be verified and therefore could not be excluded."

One real problem is that we have gotten in our discussions here much more in terms of substance than our negotiators have gotten at Geneva in formal talks.

**John Warner (R-Va.):** "He's ready to give and take, provided we recognize him as an equal. He is a very proud man, proud of his nation, of his people, of their accomplishments under a long history of adversity. Being proud, he'll go into that summit with the perception that no one will come out a winner and no one a loser."

**Paul Sarbanes (D-Md.):** "He seemed a man of some ability, with considerable confidence and a lot of energy. . . . He attached enormous importance to the summit. . . . We have to approach the Soviet Union with the perception and understanding that how we move now in shaping the relationship may provide the framework within which we operate for quite a period of time to come. We need to seize the opportunity."

**Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.):** "He is tough, bright, able, alert [a man] we can do business with."